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ABSTRACT

This is a compilation of written contributions submitted by professional and nonprofessional employees of New York City high schools. Contained in this issue are a series of articles on high school self renewal, and other articles on: the partnership between Andrew Jackson High School and Queens College; foreign language study and moral values in education. Also included are several poems and a review of Joseph Mersand's book "The English Teacher." (EB)

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# HIGH POINTS

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Books concerned with teaching and learning on the secondary school level should be sent for review to Mr. Herbert Potell at the above-listed address. School textbooks cannot be reviewed or listed.

The columns of *High Points* are open to all teachers, supervisors, administrators, secretaries, and para-professional employees of the high schools. Manuscripts cannot be returned unless specifically requested with return postage provided. All contributions *should be typewritten, double spaced, on paper 8½"— by 11"* and should be sent to Mr. Potell at the above-listed address.

The cover was designed by Mrs. Judy Koppelman, teacher of Special Education and Fine Arts at Boody Junior High School.

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## ABOUT HIGH POINTS

*High Points* is the professsional publication of the Division of High Schools. The opinions expressed are those of the writer of each article. They should not be interpreted as expressing the point of view of the editor, the Division of High Schools, the Chancellor of Schools, or the Board of Education.

*High Points* welcomes continuing features of broad educational interest. In addition, it seeks pertinent fillers: educational humor, anecdotes, boners, short paragraphs of interest to teachers. Please send these to Mr. Herbert Potell, New Utrecht High School, 1601 80 Street, Brooklyn, New York 11214. Full credit will be assigned for all material submitted that is free of copyright restrictions.

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The 1977-1978 school year may very well be the turning point for the betterment of education in New York City high schools. The climate for change is a far cry from that of recent crises-ridden school years. We will, to be sure, be enjoying far less of the affluence we once knew in what seems like eons ago. We are not advocating a policy of "making do," which often serves neither students nor staff. Rather, we call for getting the maximum mileage, to borrow popular environmental terminology, out of our present resources.

One of our continuing emphases will be the improvement of reading performance through a reexamination of materials and techniques of instruction. Thanks to the massive infusion of federal funds we have learned of the efficacy of individualization of instruction procedures and of the strengths and limitations of materials, especially of the programmed or semi-programmed variety. We know, too, that expensive mechanical aids do not necessarily do better jobs than can be done by good teachers with less expensive materials. We have successfully extended the remediation program into the content areas, but there is further urgent need to develop school-wide strategies to insure that each student benefits from instruction in each subject discipline.

Nationwide surveys have pointed up the alarming decay of writing skills among the young people of our high schools. The reason for universal concern over this development is that the ability to make a precise statement in writing is perhaps the best informal test of educational achievement that can be devised. Writing calls for a fusion of skills that involve organization of ideas; recall of data from reading, observation, and personal experience; demonstration of logic; use of techniques of subordination and coordination; application of psychology; and correctness of expression. Each subject area calls for writing activities of varying kinds. Acceptance by teachers of sloppiness and inaccuracy of expression is a disservice to our students. Here is an opportunity for staff members to develop school-wide programs that provide meaningful writing activities, reviewed and corrected by qualified teachers within reasonable time frames. We cannot afford to delay.

Curricula need to be looked at more critically. Are they really doing what they profess or are they merely fashionable? Are their objectives valid and do they provide worthwhile outcomes? Do they consider the lowest common denominator and do they offer sufficient challenge to the gifted?

Finally, school renewal projects can infuse our schools with new democratic fervor. As the current issue of *High Points* will show, such projects tend to inspire students, faculties and administrations in a common effort to arrive at new ways of achieving old goals without the loss of hegemony or sovereignty.

These are some of the handwritings we see on the wall. No doubt there are other issues and programs that will excite and inspire you during the coming school year. No matter—as long as we move forward together.

H.P.

# HIGH POINTS FOCUS ON
## SCHOOL SELF-RENEWAL: PART ONE
## RENEWAL: THE SCHOOL AS ITS OWN CHANGE AGENT

*Marc Bassin and Tom Gross*

While educators disagree considerably about which aspects of schooling are the most beneficial to students, they do agree that a key factor is being able to instill in students a sense of responsibility for their own learning and growth. Social scientists, in studying complex organizations, are coming to a similar conclusion. Organizations which are continually able to do their own problem-solving and take the initiative in adapting and responding to changing conditions seem to be the most successful and healthy. *Self-Renewal* is a term used to describe this process of ongoing change and development by organizations.

In looking at the effectiveness of school systems, the National Institute of Education has begun to focus attention directly on organizational change. The following is a quotation from a recent program plan report:

> *"Over the past decade and a half, the federal government has spent over a billion dollars on research and development on the country's pressing educational problems, and billions more on categorical aid to schools and districts. Yet, the problems remain intractable, and the repeated research finding that innovations produce 'no significant differences' has engendered such frustration that some have begun to despair of the schools' potential for improvement....Our schools have moved from a period of dynamic growth to a period of decline, with falling enrollments, mounting fiscal pressures, public frustration with large institutions generally, and the harvest of disappointment at our failure to live up to the high (and unrealistic) expectations we have had for the contribution of formal education to individual advancement and to public welfare generally....*

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Dr. Marc Bassin is Director of the High School Self-Renewal Program.
Mr. Tom Gross is Program Administrator of the High School Self-Renewal Program.

*In a situation like this, we need more urgently than ever to find out how to develop climates and organizational structures in and around schools that will allow staff and community to jointly define problems and work out solutions to them, and to create structures that recognize legitimate interests and promote genuine agreement on how best to use dwindling resources for diverse purposes."*
*(National Institute of Education Program Plan, School Capacity for Problem-Solving, 1975.)*

**Can Schools Do Their Own Problem-Solving?**

Is there such a process by which schools can engage in their own systematic problem-solving, utilizing the skills, talents, and energies of the people within the school community as the primary resources? The High School Self-Renewal Program, after seven years of development, has begun such a process in 23 New York City high schools and will be extending the Program in up to as many as seven additional schools in the fall of 1977.

Renewal began eight years ago in two New York City high schools (Brandeis and Monroe) and has evolved through a number of changes into its current form. While we have worked to improve and adapt the model to meet the changing needs and conditions of the city's schools, the basic assumptions of the model have remained constant. The three most important assumptions are that:

1. Those within the school community are most cognizant of its problems.
2. There is a large reservoir of untapped skills, talents, and energy within the individuals who serve in and are served by the schools.
3. If people within the schools get involved in planning solutions to problems they define, there will be high commitment to the implementation of these plans designed to discover solutions and the result will be ownership of the problem-solving process.

**Key Aspects of the Model**

Using these assumptions and adapting a number of the strategies and techniques from the field of organization development, the Self-Renewal Program has contributed a seven-step model of problem-solving for use by schools. We attribute the effectiveness of the model to the following aspects of the model.

1. **A Process Model** — The renewal model is a process model, a model of methodology which focuses on involvement of those within the school in systematic problem-solving. It does not deal with *which problems* the school should attack, since this determination must be made by those within the school itself. An external Renewal consultant from the Renewal central staff works with each school to help it move through the Renewal process.

2. **Flexibility** — Renewal recognizes that each school is unique, and thus the Renewal process is extremely flexible and can be utilized in a wide variety of different settings. The process may be used by an entire school to work on schoolwide problems, or by a single unit within the school, such as a cabinet, department or student government organization, to work on a problem within that unit. Likewise, Renewal can begin with a large planning group or with a small core group, depending on conditions and interest within the school. Regardless of where Renewal begins in a school, effecting change within the total school is its ultimate target.

3. **Minimal Cost** — The costs to a school for undertaking Renewal are minimal. They consist of some released time for a staff member to assume the position of internal Renewal coordinator (one to three periods) and some time given by a core group of individuals within the school, approximately one to two hours a week, for work on the process. This time may be after school, or incorporated into the regular school day as part of professional development activities, or, in the case of students, a regular class. Given these conditions, and the support

of the Borough Superintendent, the principal, and a sizable portion of the school population, Renewal can begin.

4. **Speed** — Renewal recognizes the tremendous time pressure which confronts the school staffs and has directed attention to streamlining the Renewal process to deal with time constraints. The model has been designed so that with a minimal investment of time (one to two hours a week) realization of outcomes can be attained within five months of the initiation of the Renewal process. Renewal focuses jointly on both short- and long-range activities as a means of generating quick, tangible results and of initiating new approaches to more formidable problems.

5. **Partnership with the Business Community** — An important factor in the development of the Renewal model has been the role of the business community in forming a cooperative relationship with the schools. Business has helped to provide the services of the external consultants and has participated in analysis and refinement of the actual model. The corporations are involved as resources to the Renewal schools through corporate representatives who serve as liaison to the schools. The corporate-school relationship has resulted in a better understanding between both groups and made available tangible corporate resources which have been used by the schools to implement Renewal projects.

6. **Movement toward Institutionalization** — The goal of Renewal is the institutionalization of the problem-solving process as a regular, ongoing activity in all school units. Institutionalization of the process is accomplished through the assignment of an internal coordinator and the establishment of a school-wide Renewal procedure to ensure an ongoing process and continued inculcation of the Renewal process and skills for carrying it out among staff and students. The Renewal consultant sees the establishment of a self-sustaining process within the school as his/her primary goal and responsibility. In addition to ongoing professional development for all Renewal school personnel a coordinator network helps to disseminate information and provide support through regular monthly meetings.

7. **Involvement of Students** — One of the most valid criticisms of most change efforts is the exclusion of students. While some efforts attempt to include students in the definition of current needs, few go beyond this point to involve students directly in new attempts to meet these needs. Renewal is deeply committed to the direct involvement of students throughout the entire Renewal process, both working together with staff and independently as student groups. This ensures the involvement of students in the change process and is consistent with our democratic heritage values.

### Renewal in Times of Declining Resources

Some readers may feel that Renewal is desirable during periods of stability, but inadvisable during times of declining resources. We believe that Renewal, while valuable at all times, is now more important than ever before. During a period of declining resources schools feel greater outside pressure for accountability while at the same time undergoing severe cutbacks in resources. The result is low morale among staff and a defensive posture resulting in a holding or maintenance pattern. The adoption of such a stance further weakens morale and a vicious cycle is created. Renewal, which is characterized by movement and action, can help reverse this maintenance trend and help move the school toward continuous growth and development. One way to look at schools, particularly during times of declining resources, is to see whether they are striving to grow and develop. Do they become *proactive* or turn inward and become reactive, responding to crisis after crisis? Systematic Renewal is a key characteristic of a proactive school.

### Overview of Articles

The articles that follow in this and the next issue represent the perspective of various kinds of people associated with Renewal. A student, a superintendent, several teachers, a principal, an assistant principal and administrator in the central

office of the High School Division and several Renewal consultants all have shared their own experiences. The resulting composite picture portrays the process and products of Renewal. The composite picture also highlights that the people who are involved in Renewal and have experienced its hard work, difficulties and satisfactions feel committed to its philosophy of participative planning for school improvement. These individuals have grown as people and as professionals.

"High School Self-Renewal—A Model for Releasing Creative Energies" by Dr. Fillmore Peltz, an official of the High School Division, emphasizes that certain principles are basic to creative change in schools. Communication, systematic research and development and a sense of personal ownership characterize the activities of Renewal participants. Although the process can be carried out effectively when budgets are tight, of course Renewal can produce the most with some funding. The High School Division will continue to proudly support the growth and development of the Self-Renewal Program in the city's high schools. □

# HIGH SCHOOL SELF-RENEWAL—A MODEL FOR RELEASING CREATIVE ENERGIES

*Fillmore Peltz*

The High School Self-Renewal Project, as described in the preceding overview, is a process model designed to develop an internal capacity for solving problems perceived by the school community.

The strength of the model is that it provides a structure for communication between and among the many individuals who are affected by school life and directs their energies toward constructive approaches to the solution of mutually shared problems. As a consequence, the process releases creative and constructive energies. Moreover, participatory planning provides both positive reinforcement and a framework within which the school community can agree upon priorities. Once this first step is taken, an inventory and plan of investment of available resources follow easily.

The next steps in the model provide for research, development and implementation of problem-solving procedures, and evaluation of their effectiveness. Once again, the total school community is involved in each phase of the process.

## A Valuable and Flexible Tool

An outgrowth of the fields of organization development and the social sciences, the Self-Renewal model is a valuable tool which may be effectively used by individuals addressing problems pertinent to the total school, a single department, an individual classroom, or any subset of school activities (Consultative Council, General Organization, Library, Cafeteria, etc.)

While cast within the terminology of "Renewal," the model has applicability to initial planning, and would be as valuable in a totally new organization as in a school which has existed for decades.

The model's involvement of all constituencies both demon-

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Dr. Peltz is formerly Administrator of the Access Program in the High School Division of the Board of Education and currently Principal of Deer Park High School, Deer Park, New York.

strates and fosters the sense of personal "ownership" which heightens commitment and clarifies goals. In addition, participatory planning, implementation, and evaluation build in a series of "feedback" loops which promulgate a self-monitoring capacity.

### A Process Good for Feast or Famine

While the process is highly effective when resources are abundant, it is feasible when we are faced with a period of economic decline during which resources are scarce. It is during this latter period of competition for scarce resources that the energies of a school community may be dissipated through wasteful adversary relationships engendered by competition for scarce resources. While outcomes may be circumscribed by external constraints during "lean" years, there will be constructive outcomes, and these will build morale and contribute to the internal health of the organization.

The High School Division has been proud to play an integral part in the development of Self-Renewal and will continue to support its development and foster its growth. □

# BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE AT THEODORE ROOSEVELT: A CASE HISTORY OF RENEWAL

*Robert Porterfield and Phillip Lefton*

For the last three years, Theodore Roosevelt High School has been involved in the High School Self-Renewal Program. The Renewal partnership between the Economic Development Council of New York, Inc. and the Division of High Schools has recently been described and its history traced in an article by Samuel Kostman, the principal of George Washington High School, in the April 1977 issue of *High Points*.

While each school's Renewal plan reflects the unique characteristics of that institution, each blueprint for change is based upon the conceptual model developed by the High School Self-Renewal project and described below as it developed in one high school.

Self-Renewal is a systematic process Renewal schools are using to solve problems, to improve their planning of programs and policies and to manage change. By applying the Renewal planning process, these schools are able to use and enhance the potential of their own creative staff, student and community resources and talents more effectively to meet the varying needs of students, to satisfy the demands of the changing city environment and to shape their own futures. Renewal places special emphasis on participative planning and the use of organizational development techniques.

## Ownership a Key Concept

An important concept in Renewal and the mortar that holds the "steps" together is "ownership," a personal involvement and increased understanding and responsibility by the people involved in the process of examining problems, exploring alternative solutions, and developing plans. Renewal requires the close cooperation of the principal in both the selection of a

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Robert Porterfield is School Renewal Coordinator at Theodore Roosevelt High School. Phillip Lefton is Principal of Theodore Roosevelt High School.

competent Renewal coordinator and his strong support of the Renewal plan. This support must be demonstrated by an open administration willing to consider new priorities, procedures and policies.

The seven-stage Renewal process includes entry, diagnosis, planning, research and development, implementation, evaluation and institutionalization.

The experience at Roosevelt suggests that Renewal offers considerable promise for solution of many critical problems facing educational institutions today. Our experience in each stage of Renewal is described below.

**Entry into the Renewal Project: How Roosevelt Got Involved**

The process of selecting Roosevelt in 1973 as the second Bronx Self-Renewal school involved Mrs. Bertha C. Gordon, the Borough High School Superintendent, the late Henry Saltman, school principal, and Dr. Floyd Flom, Vice President of E.D.C.

At the first fall faculty conference, both the principal and the newly selected Renewal coordinator introduced the idea of Self-Renewal to the faculty. The resources for change included a full-time coordinator, ten periods of released time for teachers to write curriculum, and a school neighborhood worker assigned to the Renewal coordinator. In addition, there was some funding from the Board of Education and the National Institute of Education. The idea of Renewal was enthusiastically accepted by faculty, student leaders, and the Parents' Association.

**Diagnosis and Planning**

Starting in September 1974, weekly participatory planning sessions averaging three hours each were held after school. Some fifty persons volunteered to attend each planning session. Included were administrators, supervisors, teachers, students, parents, members of the business community and representa-

tives from the local colleges. The first task was to develop a needs' assessment, which indicated ten broad areas of school need. The group agreed that the resources available could be used to serve only five problem areas. The areas of concentration selected by the group were basic skills, school security, careers, human relations, communications and health. Subcommittees were to explore the needs' assessment in each area and to brainstorm in order to develop suggestions for tentative solutions to the problem.

Each of the sub-committees reported its findings to the committee as a whole and requested released time to implement its projects. The planning committee selected ten projects. The released time was to be devoted to the research and development (R&D) of those new projects to be instituted the following fall term. The complete process had taken about four months. The Renewal coordinator then used the detailed minutes of the planning sessions in writing the plan. He drew up a series of objectives in priority order for each area of concentration. The written plan was discussed with the principal and presented to the participatory planning committee for its final approval.

**Research and Development**

During the spring of 1975, teachers chosen by the appropriate assistant principal for supervision began research and development in each selected area. A school Renewal committee was formed to meet on a monthly basis to broaden the plan, monitor the progress of the project and approve or reject the funding requests. It was composed of faculty, students, parents and a member of the business community, Mr. Jack McLuckie of the New York Telephone Company.

Teachers had their released time scheduled for the last period of the day. They visited other schools to learn the "state of the art" in their specific area. Teachers learned how to use the ERIC file at the Computer Center at James Monroe High School to research what had been published in their respective

disciplines. Mr. Larry Litoff, the Renewal coordinator at Monroe High School, provided the teachers with assistance in developing research skills.

At the end of the spring term, research and development had been completed for nine of the ten projects. Seven new courses were to be instituted in the fall. There were also a project in reading and one investigating student communications during the official class period. The tenth project, also in student communications, needed further work. The Renewal committee worked with the coordinator to evolve procedures for project accountability.

It is important to note that a new principal was chosen for the school in mid-1975. In August, the school Renewal coordinator met with the principal and spent several days outlining the broad program and studying the plan. The principal's reaction was one of wholehearted support for the broad aims of the project as well as praise for the plan and the strategies for implementation. Such complete support by the principal is necessary for the success of the Renewal effort.

**Implementation and Evaluation**

A released time teacher continued her work with the student group to explore methods of increasing communication with the student body. She worked with the Coordinator of Student Affairs (COSA) to find ways for the students to write, edit and print a bi-weekly newsletter. This newsletter was a product of the Renewal plan. Four thousand copies were duplicated and distributed by the COSA and the Renewal coordinator. The involvement of a dynamic COSA broadened student participation in other Renewal areas.

The monitoring process included using weekly and monthly forms submitted by the teachers to the Renewal coordinator. The committee conducted periodic interviews of the teachers. At the same time, research and development efforts were started in two new courses planned for implementation in the February

term. Another problem that surfaced was how to find a device to tap new ideas of faculty members. Another form was developed. This form solicited new ideas from the faculty. This form, when completed by the teacher, was submitted to the assistant principal for supervision for approval and then sent to the Renewal coordinator. Of approximately 50 original suggestions, 45 were forwarded to the Renewal coordinator for new courses. The committee had learned after one term of research and development that, if the department supervisor did not support a course, it would languish. The support of the department supervisor not only guaranteed expertise, but also insured a high probability of the course's inclusion under tax-levy funding after released time was no longer available. The guiding principle for the committee was that a course would be funded for a maximum of two terms with released time. After that period, it was evaluated. It was then either assumed under a tax-levy allocation or terminated.

In order to screen the 45 applications for new courses, a smaller committee was formed. This implementation committee was composed of the principal, the Renewal coordinator, the five department supervisors of the participatory planning subcommittees, two students and one parent. They interviewed each teacher who proposed a course along with the department supervisor. They then selected courses which had the highest priorities in areas outlined in the Renewal Plan. These recommendations of the small implementation committee were sent to the Renewal committee for final approval. This smaller committee was also charged with the responsibility of monitoring released time teachers.

**Institutionalization**

By the end of the second year we had institutionalized the process. We had completed the full cycle of entry, diagnosis, planning, research and development, implementation and evaluation. The cycle resumed the diagnostic step. The financial

crisis in 1976 ended our funding for released time teachers, but we were still able to continue to prepare new courses with teacher volunteers. During our third year we directed more of the Renewal effort towards the school cabinet, which now meets with the Renewal committee in joint sessions.

## Conclusion

The Renewal process is more important than any specific product of Renewal. This process encourages an open school administration and the treatment of all participants as equals. It encourages every member of the school family to define problems and to propose and help implement solutions. It develops a critical-mindedness towards present procedures and a willingness to attempt experiment and change.

Planning to cope with felt needs has led to exciting and beneficial current programs, two of which are described in this chapter by the teachers involved.

Renewal is a catalytic agent that stimulates new programs. Growing confidence in the school, based on the success of the earlier Renewal plan, encouraged the Borough High School Superintendent to grant one extra position for each of two Renewal programs. Each has been judged successful this year by objective data and the evaluation of the cabinet and school Renewal committee.

Another important fact is that the Renewal school that shows results begins to attract groups and programs in search of experimentally-minded schools. Two examples of this are Theodore Roosevelt's involvement starting in 1976-77 with Project SCE-CAMP (integrated career education) and an Ethnic Heritage Theater Program which includes daily visits by artists in residence.

In summary, Renewal has resulted in many positive changes at Roosevelt over the past three years. Adequate planning based on input from the different groups in the school community insures a more comprehensive approach to solving our problems. We have learned and are still learning to be *proactive* rather than *reactive* in many areas of school life. □

## THE SCHOOL RENEWAL COORDINATOR: KEY TO SUCCESS

*Larry Litoff*

The role of the scl ool Renewal coordinator has evolved over the life of the project and is essential to the program. The amount of time and energy that is expected of the person who assumes this role is enormous, if the job is to be done effectively and completely. One might say that the coordinator acts as "A Jack-of-All-Trades" and is expected to be a master of all of them.

The coordinator is responsible for managing the Renewal project from its inception through all of its phases to completion and then for recycling the process each year. He (for lack of a better pronoun) is the person who is responsible for seeing that each phase of the process is carried out in a systematic step-by-step manner, with careful attention given to communications, negotiation and harmonious interaction among the many constituencies that make up the school community. At times the coordinator must walk the fine line between two opposing forces and is expected to bring these forces together to express problems, feelings, frustrations, anger (at times) and finally to come to an agreement that is acceptable to all parties involved and will provide a viable solution to an existing problem.

### The Role of the Coordinator in the Six Step Process

I believe the best way to explain the coordinator's function is to follow the six-step planning process and look at the role of the coordinator during each of these phases.

#### Entry

In entry, the coordinator learns about Renewal and agrees to prepare for the role by attending a summer workshop. With the

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Mr. Litoff, former Renewal Coordinator at James Monroe High School, is now a Renewal staff consultant.

principal, the Renewal consultant, and possibly other key persons, he is involved in designing and outlining the process that will be used by Renewal in that particular school. Once a plan for the six phases of the Renewal process is agreed upon, the coordinator assumes the responsibility to move the school through the process as effectively as possible.

### Diagnosis

During the diagnostic phase of the Renewal process the coordinator leads the planning committee through the process of identifying problems in the school as these are perceived by representatives of all constituent groups in the school. He usually begins with leading a brainstorming session to obtain a preliminary list of problems. The next task is to have the committee categorize the list of problems and to develop a diagnostic instrument (questionnaire or survey) that can be distributed to the entire school community for the purpose of identifying the priorities of all of those in the school. Once the questionnaire is administered and the priorities are ascertained from the school at large, this information is made public to all the constituent groups within the school. This is the time to start expanding the participation to large numbers of people in the Renewal process by inviting people to participate in task forces in the priority problem areas.

The skills that a coordinator must have, or acquire, in order to facilitate the smooth functioning of the Renewal planning committee include team building, group process skills and leadership skills for moderating meetings and resolving conflict so that the stated goals of the committee can be reached. He must also provide for maintenance of the committee through personal contact and communication with all the members.

### Planning

The coordinator's role in the planning process is that of organizer, facilitator, workshop leader, meeting moderator and liaison person.

The planning process takes from three to six weeks after the task forces are organized. Volunteers are solicited from all groups within the school to work on specific problem areas. Care must be taken to obtain representation from all areas of the school. The organization of task forces must be carefully monitored to involve those within the school who would be directly affected by the plans and those who will implement the plans. If this process of involvement is not followed, the chances of a breakdown in the implementation phase become greater. It is helpful to include members of the faculty, administration, students, and parents in each task force so that perceptions from all groups can be considered and information regarding the specific problem can be shared openly.

The coordinator helps task forces examine both the symptoms and the causes before planning for solutions. Often identified problems turn out to be symptoms of other problems not identified. In many situations short-range solutions to attack an obvious problem may not solve the problem and prove to be only a band-aid approach.

The coordinator is responsible for monitoring the progress of each task force and making sure that each task force uses a systematic process for the planning phase. The training of task force leaders in systematic planning is the shared responsibility of the coordinator and the Renewal consultant. Once a planning strategy is developed it should be used uniformly in each task force unit. The coordinator meets with task force leaders on a regular basis to assess progress and design strategies for resolution of problems that may arise within a task force. These meetings provide a support system for task force leaders to express problems and share experiences with other task force leaders.

The plans that are developed by each task force must take into account the following:

1. Specific action steps for implementation
2. Feasibility (Resources needed and ability to control. Plans should focus on areas over which the school has control.)

3. Long-range or short-range implementation
4. Responsibility
5. Time line for implementation of each action step and deadline for completion of proposed solution

Once these plans are promulgated by each task force, they are presented to the Renewal committee for critique feedback and possible modifications. The modified plans are then presented to the principal, cabinet and faculty for further input and modification. The coordinator is responsible for seeing that input is received from all sectors of the school.

When the plans are finally approved, the coordinator monitors the Research and Development phase of the project.

**Research and Development**

In order to minimize the amount of time and effort that will be utilized during the implementation phase, it is the coordinator's role to make sure that those people responsible for implementation find out as much as possible about what has already been done around the city and the country. Contacts with other schools, searching of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) file and obtaining reading material on the specific problem area are methods used by the task force to obtain maximum information in a specific area.

**Implementation**

The implementation phase of the project is the one where the coordinator's responsibility really becomes intense. At this point the coordinator must work with the task force leader in setting up realistic time lines for the completion of the project as well as the intermediate deadlines for the completion of each action step of the plan. Logistics and resources must be worked out beforehand so that implementation will be smooth.

Periodic meetings with the principal, coordinator and task force leaders should be held to report on progress, to identify problems in implementation and to develop strategies to solve

those problems. It is the coordinator's responsibility to see that the principal and all personnel directly affected by the project are informed about its progress and have adequate opportunity for input.

By setting up a system for monitoring the progress of the task forces, implementation of projects will move swiftly and efficiently.

### Evaluation

Evaluation of projects is an essential part of the Renewal program. Ongoing evaluation serves as a diagnosis for mid-course corrections in the implementation process. The coordinator is responsible for establishing a process for formative evaluation of projects within the school. This process should involve the project leader, the principal and participants in the project. Decisions regarding the efficacy of the project and whether or not the project should be continued are made according to a process agreed on in the entry phase of Renewal by all those who have had input in designing the program.

### The Coordinator as Liaison and Optimist

In addition to the other responsibilities described above, the coordinator serves as a liaison between the planning committee and the school, the task forces and the planning committee, the principal and the planning committee, the school and the community, the planning committee and COSA, and the school and the corporate representative.

Finally, the coordinator serves as the eternal optimist in the school setting. He provides a place for any member of the school community to come to express problems, discuss ideas, and obtain resources. At times he is all things to all people and walks a fine line between frustration and accomplishment. He is the confidante to some and the change agent to others. He is at once the mover and the catalyst for improvement and changes in the school. □

## A RENEWAL OUTCOME: CAREER EDUCATION

*Eileen Stark*

Thanks to the School Renewal Program, Theodore Roosevelt High School has an extensive career education program which serves all its students and is a resource to its teachers as well. The program is a direct outcome of the Renewal planning process whereby administrators, faculty, students and community members pinpointed the need for such a program. Visits to other sites to see what was working elsewhere resulted in the decision to adapt aspects of the career resource program of George Washington High School.

To implement the program the school Renewal coordinator met with the principal for the purpose of allocating Renewal funds to build a career resource center. A suitable place was selected to house this center—a portion of the school's library where students could have access to both written literature and audio-visual materials. The center was staffed by a part-time coordinator and librarians, who agreed to assist students when the coordinator was unavailable. The center was named C.O.R.C. (Career Orientation and Resource Center) and began operation in the spring of 1976. Today the center requires two coordinators, many student assistants and the help of our three librarians. Classes are scheduled for group orientation. These sessions are followed by individual appointments. The center has increased in size, making the purchase of additional shelves and furniture necessary. An outgrowth of the center is the "CORC TALK" article which appears in each issue of the "Teddy Bear Tribune," a semi-monthly student newsletter. This serves as one tool for the dissemination of career information to students.

An extension of the center is our annual Career Day held in May. Under the direction of Mr. Robert Ascher of the Bronx Career Counseling and Resource Center, students completed a survey containing choices of occupations from 11 different clusters. Students are then programmed individually based on

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Ms. Stark is a Teacher of Secretarial Studies and Career Coordinator at Theodore Roosevelt High School.

their preferences to attend three different classes and hear speakers from business and industry. This gives our students first-hand knowledge of what a particular career entails, how much or how little education is needed and what the outlook for the future will be. After the presentations, the business representatives are invited to have lunch with our faculty so that bridges can be built between faculty, students, and business people.

The most recent outgrowth of our career program is a new course entitled "Career Exploration" offered to ninth grade students in the new mini-school. The course was written by the two career coordinators, Barbara Kapin and Eileen Stark, and a member of the Accounting Department, Bill Capalbo. The writing of this course was funded by Project SCECAMP (a federally funded program seeking to broaden the scope of career education in New York City). Our developing career program attracted SCECAMP to the school and the project has provided Roosevelt with funds to write additional career-infused curricula in such areas as mathematics, English, and science and has supplied monies for the purchase of instructional and audio-visual materials for the CORC center. The course covers such topics as Why People Work, Decision Making, Personality, and Values Clarification, since the major objective of the course is to increase awareness in students.

While we have cited these three major career programs, we would also note several ongoing career programs, such as visits from the "Living Witness" program, use of the "Career Awareness Program" sponsored by New York Telephone Company, and a career program designed for our physically handicapped students.

While the career program is a reality at Roosevelt, there is still much to be done for our students in this area. The commitment of Renewal to continue career education will enable us to build on the firm foundations that have been established in the past two and one-half years. □

## OUTCOMES OF RENEWAL PLANNING

*Virginia S. Newton*

The following pages illustrate how some of the talented and creative persons in Renewal schools have helped to develop, implement and extend programs within their schools as part of the Renewal process.

### S.O.S. at JULIA RICHMAN HIGH SCHOOL

Students-Offering-Service (SOS), a peer-advisor program, was the outcome of planning ways of reaching and orienting incoming ninth graders at Julia Richman High School. A large Renewal Committee, composed of administrators, teachers, students, parents and community representatives had analyzed the problems of absence, drop-outs and academic deficiencies and found these problems were especially critical and prevalent among ninth graders. Carole Fayne, a teacher of home economics and grade advisor, expressed interest in developing a peer advisor program to solve some of the problems. She had taken a master's degree and postgraduate courses in guidance, group dynamics and problems of disadvantaged youth. Members of the Renewal Committee, including the principal, assistant principals, teachers and students, interviewed Ms. Fayne for the position and recommended her appointment as program coordinator, with two periods of released time for developing and implementing the program in the first year and one period in the second year.

#### Goals Established

Ms. Fayne outlined six major goals of the program as follows:

1. To assist ninth graders make a successful adjustment to their new surroundings, without feeling lost or confused and to accelerate the orientation process

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Dr. Newton is a member of the Renewal Program Staff who helped to organize and edit this focus.

2. To provide examples of positive student behavior and attitudes for imitation and motivation
3. To increase student responsibility for maintaining a positive atmosphere for learning
4. To improve communication throughout the school for students and staff
5. To provide opportunities for personal growth through interaction and communication
6. To improve academic learning through peer-mediated activities

**Procedures.** The next stages included finding out about other programs, identifying, training materials and setting up a program for Julia Richman. Ms. Fayne then explored opportunities for peer advisor participation throughout the school which were relevant to the program goals. She established criteria for acceptance into the program and set up recruiting procedures. After designing and implementing a training program, Ms. Fayne placed the peer advisors in the various positions she had previously identified in the school. Finally she established an ongoing weekly dialogue and meeting with the advisors to solve problems as they arose.

**Activities.** Peer advisors work in home-room sections and in certain ninth grade English classes to help the new students adjust to high school and to assist them with problems as they arise in the fall terms. In addition the peer advisors serve in the Career Resource Center helping students explore various careers; they work in the ninth grade mini-school assisting in orientation, communication and tutoring activities. The peer advisors have participated in a "rap" room to help students referred for discipline or academic problems, and they have assisted guidance and attendance personnel in completing end-term business in preparation for the coming term.

The goals of the program have been met over the past two years as the program has continued to expand throughout the school and as staff have requested additional services of the peer advisors. To date 35 advisors have advised and helped approxi-

mately 1,000 students, most of whom were in the ninth grade.

**Evaluation.** Ongoing evaluation of the program has been carried out through discussions, questionnaires and observations and has resulted in redesigning some of the procedures, altering some peer advisor assignments and developing new opportunities for peer advisor participation. Evaluation shows that the program offers opportunities for growth and leadership for the senior peer advisors, provides motivation and assistance in building the academic skills of younger students, and enhances communication and responsibility throughout the school. □

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## THE TEACHER OF POETRY TO THE TEACHER OF GEOMETRY

*You teach the concrete truths of math,*
*So solid and exact,*
*So analytical and cold,*
*So firmly based on fact.*

*I teach the flimsy stuff of dreams,*
*So fragile and ideal,*
*So gossamer and tenuous,*
*So protean and real.*

*—Morris Light*

# WINNERS OF THE 1977 NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL POETRY CONTEST

## FIRST PRIZE

### deliquium

*Arnold Barkus*

*so blame the iron fist that fed him*
*fluorescent block letters from pure*
*smelling textbooks in a school house*
*built from a giant erector set with*
*grown ups that never touched but talked*
*like cheap radios and smelled of*
*greased metal*
*penetrating the soft transluscent*
*skull of a baby like*
*a knife through a network of fat*
*reaching the core that lived like lava*
*in the center of his earth*
*to kill what was smacked in a blinding*
*white room with metal utensils that*
*clink like prison guard keys.*

* * * * * *

## SECOND PRIZE

### Outburst for Patti Smith

*Eileen Coyne*

*pale flowers are burning out behind my eyes.*
*brain crystals crystallizing rainbow confection.*
*dissolving. sugar in water all mind corridors*
*with doors ajar. bell jar cracking.*

*how about:*
*an airport. kennedy? idlewild? idol*
*wild. 2 am. i breeze in. terminal. i cleave the*
*night, cleaving chrome, plastic, and fluorescent light*
*w/shadows. i'm blase. i cleave the whiskey sky.*

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Arnold Barkus is a student at Sheepshead Bay High School. His English teacher was Mr. James Mangano.

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Eileen Coyne is a student at Richmond Hill High School. Her English teacher was Ms. Lettie Silver.

*i sniff around. there she is. wolfish eyes,*
*concentrated lupine grace, black dress, pointed shoes.*
*madonna & child style she's cradling a book. seventh*
*heaven. the music—sound of airplane motors idling*
*in the outer darkness. the crowd huddled in this*
*lump of fluorescense fades to the edge of my vision.*
*black & white film. all i see is her, slumped in the*
*waiting chair. my eye doll, idle. idyllic. i stride up.*
*she is damp and still. she still smells like the stage.*
*we melt/into the bruised night/together.*
*little bursts of poetry escape.*
*i am looking for a word to cling to.*
*you understand the huge feelings and*
*the little poems of adolescense.*

*how about:*
*central park. we cruise. we bruise the*
*afternoon. april. break some lilac stalks. we're cool.*
*we're stalking something. the androgenous moment?*
*traces of the aris rhythm? some ultimate intensity?*
*i am all caught up in the lines around her eyes.*
*the earth is churning and pregnant. it nauseates me.*
*we kick stones. we stone the lake. the ripples*
*and the sky play to us like some jazz theme. she is*
*riding her horse metaphor. she is faster than me.*
*she breaks into a gallop and i am left behind.*
*i scream myself hoarse. but not horse.*
*wall of intimidation/i crash. she has screamed*
*herself horse. i trail her to the sea.*
*fantasy. phantom sea. phantom, see?*

*outburst. burst out. burned out. burn....*

* * * * * *

## THIRD PRIZE

### Dedication

*Elisa Triffleman*

*We're problem children, my dear.*

*I carried a mirror in my handbag*
*One time only. I never*
*believed in affirmation by tin-foil or silver-backed glass.*

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Elisa Triffleman is a student at Edward R. Murrow High School. Her English teacher was Mr. Jeff Levitsky.

*I carried it for other's convenience:*
*My mother's pocket mirror.*
*I cut my hand on its cracked glass,*
*reaching for my glasses—a note pad—*
*A wallet? My affirmation comes from*
*Hundreds of manila credentials I carry*
*Along with neatly folded dollars in*
*Indian crafted leather from a stand*
*On a street with hundreds of shoes with points*
*wrangling with the sidewalk.*
*I have ceased trying to tame*
*The Lioness with a brush.*

*You have been growing your hair for four years—*
*A commitment to yourself. You tell me*
*your eyes are paper bag color*
*And that there is nothing in the world*
*to be taken seriously:*
*You read my palm*
*(Perhaps my cut hand should not have healed*
*But left a scar that follows my life line*
*past courage or calluses.*
*Events and outlooks are mutable as I*
*fall and scrape the translucent wrinkles.)*
*And tell my fortune with picture cards.*
*When I told yours,*
*You groaned, "The Hermit. Death. Or The Tower*
*Will appear, will chasten me, will point*
*The way." The Hermit approached:*
*Diogenes and a troubled road.*

*We're problem children, my dear.*

*I'm lanky—or lithe, as fashions go. I pretend*
*To ignore those yellow press pages, the painted eyes,*
*Hands that never touch clocks. Even the Tall Woman*
*Wears two-inch heels. I laugh (sucking in the breath)*
*And cautiously lower hems. I say,*
*No one sees or cares that I have followed them*
*Three steps between.*

*You're broad. You*
*seem embarrassed of your size, as if*
*Your friend, a slender-hip,*
*Posed a question that needs an answer.*
*You prepare fortification: a guise,*
*a persona or five for intensity.*
*Where are you, between the black of your workshirt*
*And your curvatures of glass?*

## A CREATIVE SPEECH PROGRAM

### Speech Department of James Madison High School

What makes humans unique is their ability to transmit information. However, the process of communication is passing most of our young people by. The precious heritage of language is being ignored. At James Madison High School, we in the Speech Department have reversed the trend by offering our students an unparalleled series of diversified speech courses geared to their varied aptitudes.

### Speech the Mandate of the Times

In an era when communication is the key word and most transactions are done verbally, both in the social and business worlds, effective speech is a must. The need for speech in a high school curriculum seems apparent to all but the most shortsighted. We must teach our students how to cope with a world where their speech skills, or lack of them, will contribute to success or failure in their professional and private lives. In a media-dominated world, we, the educators, must set standards for appropriate verbal communication. Businesses are showing their concern over the growing numbers of inarticulate applicants for jobs at all levels. Colleges are aware of the demand for programs in communication. We, at James Madison High School, have always believed in our commitment to the teaching of speech. Now, with the encouragement of our supportive new principal, Ira Ewen, we have developed a program unique in the high schools because of its variety and scope.

All students are programmed for a term of speech, not corrective but practical, in their junior year. It is here that the students acquire a knowledge of basic skills of communication as well as an appreciation of contemporary plays and their authors. Following the basic course, students may elect one or more advanced courses, such as Speech Arts, Mass Media, Literature of the Theatre, and Plays and People. Students may

take drama as a three-year sequence or as elective courses which include Drama Workshop and Varsity Players. Two traveling troupes from these courses go to neighborhood elementary and junior high schools as well as to civic organizations where they entertain appreciative young audiences.

However, this is only a small fraction of our program. We meet the many needs of our students in an even greater variety of pertinent courses related to our special programs.

**New School Option Provides Added Stimulus**

In our new educational option, C.A.M., Center of Administration and Management, which has the cooperation of business firms who are eager to give our students internships and colleges which will accept them for advanced study, we require students to take a highly specialized course concentrating on communication skills in business. The area of business and professional speech communication has grown considerably in size and stature. We anticipate increased recognition of the need to develop students who are able to assume responsible positions in the fast expanding area of business communication. In our Law Institute, the first term of speech is followed by a term of Argumentation and Debate. In the Bio-Medical Program, following the initial semester of honor speech, a wide variety of speech electives are available to highly motivated students.

**Proof Is in the Carry-over**

These courses sound fine, you may say, but how much carry-over is there for the student? We have found that the students, themselves, are the ones who show impetus in putting their training to work. For over two decades it has been the students who have organized, written and trained their peers to put on a Sing Performance to standing-room-only audiences. The Third World Club has progressed from a club with monthly meetings to an integrated group of students who have organized evening performances which include drama, fashion, and dance

as an expression of our youth. School theatre parties are avidly subscribed to, and as for "two-fors,"—we can't get enough of them. Our students volunteer for public speaking contests, try out for Varsity Shows, audition for colleges of performing arts and apply to colleges where communication and related subjects are available.

Students who have majored in fields other than communications have returned to thank us for building their self-confidence and giving them the tools of preparation and presentation in research. In other words, our students are exploring the many avenues that channel their speech training from the classroom into their lives in the community.

Whether students go into business, law, medicine, theatre, or whether they are concerned only with the demands of social situations, critical listening and effective speech are necessary skills they must develop. We, at James Madison High School, are involved in training our students to meet the challenge of a verbally oriented society. The future may depend on how successfully we do it! □

# THE ANDREW JACKSON-QUEENS COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP STORY

*Murray Bromberg and Joseph Wolfson*

For some years sporadic attempts have been made to establish significant bridgeheads between the New York City high schools and the branches of City University. As a matter of fact, the educational departments of the city colleges have had a long history of successful cooperation with the city school system; furthermore, many local teachers are graduates of CUNY who got their training as student teachers in the New York City schools. Despite such ties, however, no continuing or viable interchange and sharing of mutual resources were ever developed.

In 1973 an abortive attempt was made to establish some type of collaboration within the educational framework of the borough of Queens. Known as the "Queens Learning Common,"[1] it featured a four-way partnership among Queens College, a high school, a junior high school and an elementary school. The project planners hoped to create an organization which would share "a common site, develop educational goals and values and implement common programs." Unfortunately, the proposed involvement was buried quietly without any visible mourners at the funeral.

## Birth of a Collaborative Effort

Toward the end of the 1974-75 school year the impetus for a renewed effort to establish closer relations between the two systems came from a joint statement of the Chancellor of the Board of Education, Irving Anker, and the then President of the Board of Higher Education, Alfred Giardino. Both pledged the highest priority and unqualified support for a new collaboration between CUNY and the New York City high schools. As a

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Mr. Bromberg is Principal of Andrew Jackson High School.
Mr. Wolfson is Assistant Principal (Supervision—Social Studies) in the same school.
[1]The schools involved in this abortive program were Queens College, John Bowne High School, J.H.S. 218Q and P.S. 119Q.

beginning, five local high schools were to be paired with five of the city's colleges.[2]

### The Time Was Opportune

The call for new linkages by the educational leadership of the city was heard at a most opportune time. The "Open Admissions Program" of CUNY was under attack by college faculties who were distressed because many of their new students lacked basic skills. It was obvious to them that those young people would experience failure in college unless a massive effort was undertaken to provide supportive remediation both in the high schools and at the colleges. The professional staff of CUNY, although well-prepared and trained in specific areas of remediation techniques, could profit from a greater understanding of the learning process in the high schools. At the same time, high school teachers needed to learn more about diagnosis and correction of reading, writing and math difficulties from the college faculty. An interchange of college staff and high school teachers, the sharing of materials and techniques and an improved awareness of each other's roles were among the objectives of the project's planners. Vigorous support came from Samuel Polatnick, Executive Director of the High School Division, who assigned Dr. Fillmore Peltz, head of the Access Office, to serve as marriage-broker, consultant and expediter for the entire program. CUNY's opposite number at first was Dr. Allen Friedman and then Dr. Rachel Weddington, Dean of Teacher Education for CUNY.

Andrew Jackson High School's partnership in the program had an understandable rationale. Once a well-integrated school, it had become totally segregated by 1974 and was searching for educational stability and a strengthened image. Despite the fact that over 90% of its graduates went on to colleges (including some of the nation's most prestigious institutions), community residents were displaying the same prejudice toward Andrew Jackson High School that they traditionally directed at all-black

[2] The pairings were (a) Springfield Gardens H.S. with York College, (b) Thomas Jefferson H.S. with Brooklyn College, (c) Lehman H.S. with Lehman College, (d) Andrew Jackson H.S. with Queens College, and (e) Seward Park H.S. with Hunter College.

schools. A marriage with Queens College was seen as one of the ways to counteract the unfavorable and unfair image of Jackson's educational program.

Queens College would profit, too. Long viewed as an educational island which was indifferent to the black community, the college was eager for an opportunity to display its sense of social responsibility. In addition, the college's undergraduates stood to gain from the realistic teacher-training facilities which were available at Jackson. Although Emily Dickinson had said that there was "no frigate like a book," the educational majors would learn that books and college lectures were no substitutes for a shakedown cruise in the waters of a large urban high school.

**Partnership Takes Shape**

The Andrew Jackson-Queens College partnership began to take shape during the summer of 1974. In anticipation of a summer mini-grant, Dr. Janet Ezair, Assistant Dean of Education at Queens College, arranged for a series of planning sessions starting in May. Participants differed in their views of many issues but were most enthusiastic about the partnership's possibilities. Through the summer months the staffs met regularly to prepare curricula and a preliminary budget for the school year. When school started in September the fledgling program was ready to try out its spindly legs. It was decided by consensus that the collaboration would start out with three central themes:

1. Andrew Jackson High School would avail itself of the tutorial and remediation resources of Queens College.
2. College undergraduates would get training in teacher development on the high school's campus.
3. The resources of Queens College would not be limited to its Department of Education. Andrew Jackson, a magnet school of music and art, for example, would expect assistance from these college departments, as well.

### Intermeshing of Program Develops

In the fall of 1974 a number of interesting moves were made, including the working relationship between the high school and the college's Educational Clinic. Jackson students who had registered for a course in psychology were bussed to the college clinic twice a month in order to observe staff techniques in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. College teachers came to the psychology class each week to offer assistance and to evaluate progress. In the following year, a most successful full-day seminar on the problems of adolescence was arranged for Jackson students, parents and teachers by Dr. Angrelli and the staff of the Clinic.

Murray Bromberg, Jackson's principal, designated Joseph Wolfson, Assistant Principal/Supervision in Social Studies, to be the high school's liaison, while Dr. Rachel Weddington was relieved of some of her teaching duties in order to coordinate the college's part of the program.

Mr. Wolfson was able to get good cooperation from his colleagues, but it took great skill on Dr. Weddington's part to convince some college professors of the merits of the partnership. Well known and respected at Queens, she managed to overcome their initial skepticism and she impressed the Jackson faculty with her intelligence and commitment. Her meetings with parents, students, and teachers not only solidified support for the collaboration but lent credence to the view that the college would extend itself.

### Teacher Training Institute a Cornerstone of Program

Both Mr. Wolfson and Dr. Weddington worked closely to organize a teacher-training institute during the fall term in which Queens College students would begin their foundation studies in education by volunteering for field service at Jackson. Over 100 undergraduates engaged in some aspect of tutoring activity in different subject areas; those volunteers also observed classes, participated in extra-curricular programs and accom-

panied the younger students on field trips. In the spring, the undergraduates advanced to Education 9 or 10 and continued their field work or tutoring at the high school.

One of the positive and immediate consequences of their activity was that a number of those undergraduates who went on to student teaching elected Jackson as the school of their choice. It was encouraging to all participants to see that white college students who had formerly shunned Jackson for student teaching were now signing up for it.

At the completion of the honeymoon year, the partnership program was renewed for 1975-76. Dr. Weddington, having been promoted to Dean of Teacher Education for CUNY, was succeeded by Dr. William Proefriedt, a popular Queens College teacher who had helped with the initial planning of the project. He helped to strengthen the tutorial and student teacher-training programs which had been received so favorably the first year. Under his leadership, college undergraduates came to Jackson for tutoring and special projects. Education professors made Jackson their home base for instruction.

**Ideas Derive from All Levels**

Ideas came from all levels. A Queens College student, Edward Butcher, who had been assigned to Jackson's Pioneer School, capitalized upon his own expertise as a pilot to motivate the high school pupils. He organized an extra-curricular Aviation Club at Jackson, introducing the students to the fundamentals of flight and to career opportunities in aviation. Mr. Butcher brought guest speakers and films, and with parent approval he took club members aloft for their first flights.

In the spring of 1975 the Queens College Writing Skills Center established a tutorial program in which Jackson students received individualized help. These Queen College tutors were graduate students who had been trained specifically for this program and were supervised by the Skills Center. More than 200 Jackson students, many of them with serious writing deficien-

cies, began to write more correctly and enjoy the process. The personal interest shown by the tutors helped many of the Jacksonites to overcome some of their writing disabilities.[3]

Another highlight of the partnership during this time was the sponsorship by Queens College of Art Berger, who became known as Jackson's "poet-in-residence." Mr. Berger, assisted by his colleague, Richard Orange, visited every English class in the school, encouraging Jackson students to try their hand at creative writing. Every Tuesday, Mr. Berger joined with a group of volunteer Jackson students in a "writing workshop." By term's end, the workshop had not only captured the imagination of the young people but led to the creation of a book of stories, poems and essays by Jackson students.

**New Components Added**

Another new project of the spring term was the creation of a newspaper for the Pioneer mini-school. Members of the editorial staff of one of Queens College's newspapers, *Newsbeat*, came to Jackson to work with a group of these ninth year students. By the end of the term the students were near to the production of their own mini-school paper. More significant, however, was the fact that this project helped to motivate the high school students to develop basic writing skills.

A reading component was added to the partnership. Dr. George Phillips of the graduate division of CUNY had already familiarized himself with the reading scores of Jackson students. As a result of his analysis of the New York State tests given to Jackson students in the ninth grade, he supported the idea of an intensive reading improvement program. Although Jackson had a thorough and well-organized reading laboratory program, Dr. Phillips looked upon his role in the partnership as a contributor and consultant. He would help train both teachers and undergraduates from Queens College in reading improvement procedures in all subject areas. Dr. Phillips organized a

[3]Dr. Maureen Waters of Queens College was assigned as the supervisor to the graduate tutor program at Jackson.

seminar at Jackson which was attended by both Jackson faculty and college undergraduates. As a result of his experiences at Jackson, he recommended that the Queens College undergraduate program in reading be made an integral part of the partnership.

The mathematics department of Andrew Jackson, acknowledging the severe deficiencies among its incoming pupils, also looked to Queens College for help. Although Jackson, with the aid of a federal grant, had established more than thirty-two remedial math-labs, the department sensed that a collaboration with Queens College could lead to newer insights into the entire field of remediation. Faculty members of the secondary education department—mathematics division—began to meet on a regular basis with Jackson's math teachers. Queens College staff listened to their concerns and comments, examined current procedures, sat in on subject classes and tried to make a contribution toward the improvement of the department.

**Involvement Pays Off**

The heavy involvement of Queens mathematicians during the 1975-76 school year achieved practical results. A revision of the pre-algebra curriculum for Jackson was prepared. Jackson seniors who were college bound were offered a special course, "Math Through Statistics," modeled after a similar course taken by Queens College freshmen. It was felt that Jackson seniors who completed the course would make a smoother transition into CUNY's math program. A tutorial program in which high school seniors would assist entering junior high pupils was also attempted.[4]

Dr. Jack Zevin, a specialist in the social sciences, volunteered to explore with Jackson's Social Studies Department the possibilities of incorporating newer techniques in dealing with freshmen who were either apathetic about social studies or experiencing a high degree of failure. Dr. Zevin met weekly with small groups of teachers who were impressed by his experiences

[4]This program was directed by Harvey Walker, another good friend of the partnership program from Queens College.

as a teacher in the Chicago school system, his work in curriculum revision and his extensive publications. In the 1976-77 school year Dr. Zevin was appointed as liaison from Queens College to Jackson and has been busy preparing a series of proposals for the purpose of establishing a center for the Humanities which would involve both Queens College and the Jackson faculty.[5]

The idea of a Humanities Center arose in part from a course given to Jackson students by Dr. Proefriedt at Jackson. His elective, "Introduction to Philosophy," was so popular that Jackson teachers often attended on their own time. Students and faculty were engaged in a discussion of current moral, ethical and philosophical issues of our time.

### City's Fiscal Crisis Affects Project

The fiscal crisis in the city cut deeply into the partnership program. Many programs, dependent upon the good will of the staff of Queens College, disappeared because of "retrenchment." Much of the success of the program had originated with the younger and more enthusiastic staff personnel from Queens College, and, unfortunately, several of these individuals lost their jobs. The Educational Clinic of Queens College, another substantial resource of great assistance to Jackson, was eliminated. The stream of undergraduates also began to dry up as many of these students transferred from courses in education to other disciplines. Funds for Jackson's "poet-in-residence" and related tutorial help in writing improvement were cut off. Finally, Mr. Giardino's departure from the Board of Higher Education complicated the already difficult situation confronting the partnership.

### Collaboration Proceeds under Own Power

The collaboration, although still a priority item, was forced to search within itself for survival. The liaison to Andrew Jackson from Queens Colege, Dr. Zevin, unable to devote full

[5]Dr. Zevin has also been a consultant to the new pre-law program now being offered at Jackson.

time to the partnership, nevertheless pushed ahead with the program. It was agreed that the little monies made available for the 1976-77 year would be employed primarily in the spring term. For the fall semester, all efforts would be applied toward the maintenance of programs not requiring any funding. For the first time in the collaboration, the science department would be brought into the program. With the aid of a small grant from the Biological Curriculum Development Foundation, a new approach to the teaching of General Science for 9th year students was prepared for implementation in the spring term of 1977. Two groups of science and social studies students would work individually and often independently with materials and equipment supplied by the foundation. Queens College would send a consultant to the experimental course and Dr. Phil White, already involved in the project at Queens College, would cooperate with Jackson staff to develop evaluative instruments.

Mr. Wolfson and Dr. Zevin arranged to have a number of Queens College personnel come onto the Andrew Jackson campus in the spring term of 1977. Professor John Lidstone will invite Jackson's art students to visit with his college classes where they will have access to specialized equipment. A special course in economics will be given jointly by Dr. Zevin and the chairperson of Andrew Jackson's Social Studies Department. Dr. Rice of Queens College, an expert in law education, will sponsor a pre-law program at Jackson, while Professor Judy Cohen will affiliate with another mini-school, the Jackson Academy. These new programs for the 1977 school year represent but a part of the partnership which has grown between the two institutions.

**Did Collaboration Alter Image of School?**

What are the feelings of Jackson teachers and students toward the partnership? An effort to assess the reaction of the Jackson participants was made by a questionnaire, personal interviews, and a group conference. Although there was much praise for the program, the concensus of opinion was that Jack-

son's image, considerably improved by the association with Queens College, still had a long way to go. Little had been accomplished in the way of changing the school population. Too many capable students from the feeder schools were still selecting other high schools for their education. In short, Jackson cannot rely solely upon the collaborative program to help win converts from the community.

In September of 1976, at a meeting of representatives of different college-high school partnerships, chaired by Dr. Rachel Weddington, the participants agreed that the time had come for the establishment of a functioning educational consortium. This consortium would involve a partnership of all city schools within each borough, with the stress upon a totality of involvements between the partners rather than a mere concentration upon remediation. The bits and pieces of the partnership should be cemented into a model or structure which represents a unified, educational unit. This functioning unit or educational corporation, properly funded and staffed, would reflect a working partnership in which all of the schools would share a common purpose, strive for a common educational objective and develop common programs. □

# THE MATTER AT HAND, BEARING UPON, CONNECTED WITH, PERTINENT TO, RELEVANT TO: FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

*Paul Siegel*

Proponents of foreign language study have long been confronted with the fallacious arguments that the time required for foreign language study could be put to better use, and that foreign languages are of questionable relevance for today's students. My answer to such critiques is, "Hogwash!"

Let's look at the charge that an extensive period of time is required to develop the proficiency that enables a student to make practical use of his second or third language. To begin with, a considerable *corpus* of basic high frequency language which allows for communication can be mastered in a relatively short time. We learn the power of *por favor* and *gracias*, or *bon jour, ca va*? It is not valid criticism of foreign language study to say that the application of lengthy periods of time is a requisite to make such study useful. Significant activities can be maintained at an early stage of language study. Why, we speak even our native language unabashedly before acquiring great skill. Total immersion language experiences are not new to the infant; learning our native language thoroughly takes a long time. Language is useful, however, at any stage or age, whatever its purpose. Time is recognized as a concomitant to developing skills in any area.

## Foreign Language Study Pays Off Sooner

Stemming from the complexities of knowledge and of advanced technology, twentieth century needs indicate that specialization of knowledge is mandatory, in language, along with science and mathematics. In terms of practical application, we can make significant use of foreign language after a much shorter period of instruction than we can in the case of such skills as accountancy, statistics, stenography, carpentry, tennis and typing.

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Mr. Siegel is Assistant Principal (Supervision—Foreign Languages) at Seward Park High School.

Newspaper reporters such as Gene Maeroff, of *The New York Times*, wishing to be kind to foreign language study, report that such study has "fallen from grace." When so many American schools do not offer instruction in foreign languages, and when most students attending schools that do offer such instruction are never programmed to study a foreign language, how can we speak of favor, of privilege or of concession? The truth of the matter is that for Americans, foreign language study has never been *in* a state of grace. At best, foreign language study has declined from a state of neglect to a practice of abstinence. Unfortunately, a preponderance of teachers and definers of relevance seem bent on abstaining from what does bear upon the matter at hand. They convey the impression that the instrument of intelligence, the medium of human exchange, the keys to the kingdom of man, the very essence of man, is irrelevant: to them, language is irrelevant. It is not required. Are they not cognizant of the most recent hypothesis of Philip Lieberman, linguist of Brown University, and Edmund Crelin, anatomist of Yale University School of Medicine, which attributes the demise of Neanderthal man to his inability to speak a sophisticated language as a result of the internal shape of his throat, a distinct physiological disadvantage? The logical inference is that sophisticated language skills are necessary for survival in a complex society. Shall we retrogress? Can we afford to?

**Foreign Language Study an Integral Part of Liberal Education**

I submit that foreign language study is an integral part of liberal education, bears upon the development of salable skills, is pertinent to a multitude of careers, diminishes many stumbling blocks to study and learning, remedies the incapacity of our citizens to cope with their fellows, internationally as well as locally, and is, in short, the most relevant subject in the curriculum, alongside English. Essential to the study of a foreign language is the development of reading skills, with such areas of concern as main ideas, supporting details, contextual clues and

inferences as regular fare. Literary, historical, biblical and contemporary allusions, symbols, figures of speech, are all the bread and butter of intellectual life and of foreign language study. Vocabularies are enhanced by such words as visage, extirpate, sortie, antiquity, physiognomy, cognates which are usually first encountered in the foreign language class and which emphasize commonalities among men of different tongues.

A major direction in education today is toward career education. Several ads placed by business and industry disclose the relationship between the values and achievements of foreign language study and those of the world of commerce. A Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc. advertisement in checklist form (*Business World*, Spring 1974) asks potential account executives if they can "speak with...customers on an intelligent basis with a well-stocked vocabulary and comprehend quickly the impact of events...."

**A Contribution to Many Fields and in Many Directions**

An article by Rea Smith, in the same issue of *Business World*, propounds the idea that "An empathetic understanding of people is necessary..." to operate effectively in the growing field of public relations. "Since the successful public relations executive must also have a feeling for the world around him, a basic knowledge of psychology and the social sciences is equally essential." Inherent in such concern is a recognition of the vital role that studies of foreign languages and cultures must play.

The panoply of foreign languages must be acknowledged in the field of health as well. Doctors, nurses, dieticians, medical record specialists, even cashiers, function most effectively with knowledge of foreign languages. Let's not lose sight of the fact that many Americans have recourse to foreign medical schools where knowledge of the language of the host country is mandatory. Du Pont proclaims that "the best chemistry is people chemistry. Anything can be achieved if you have the right people and they talk to each other." What happens if the right peo-

ple speak a foreign language? The right chemistry can emerge if, primarily, they can communicate with each other. In any arena where people do business with people, foreign language competency is invaluable. In the field of dramatic arts, Kirk Douglas, Liza Minnelli and Telly Savalas have all endorsed the need for foreign languages. Further confirmation of the practical, money-in-your-pocket, job-enhancing values of foreign language competency is superfluous.

**Pertinency Established**

Just what is pertinent to students? Many students first learn the metric system in their foreign language classes, and are made aware of its widespread use. Many mathematicians and historical giants are noted repeatedly in language classes: Descartes, Fermat, Pascal, von Leibnitz, Euler, Gauss, Lobachevsky, Poincare, to mention a few. Basic arithmetic is reinforced; similar claims may be made with regard to science learnings. Art is viewed and analyzed, and students are given free reign in applying their talents to the esthetic-operational needs of language study. The overlapping concerns and substantive details of history, geography, nationalism, economics, politics, current events, music, psychology, and ecology are everyday fare in language classes and need not be elaborated upon.

Some kids may be out having other good times, but the kid who's going to produce something, be he "ugly, sick, miserable or schlumpy sits around...and thinks. He's like an oyster growing this pearl of feelings which becomes the basis of an art," says Francis Coppola of current cinema fame. (*Newsweek*, November 25, 1974).

Language performs the function of providing something to think about, and the person who provides this matrix, the stuff to dream on, is the language teacher, who is not the fossil he is made out to be. He and she are as equipment-wise, innovative, eclectic, and as gracious as teachers of any other discipline. We can rap with the best of them; we can work with and encourage

the student who wishes to design his own curriculum, study abroad, or develop some intensely personal form of expression.

**Students Like Language Study**

Investigations at Urbana, Illinois, reported in the *Modern Language Journal* (March 1974), reveal that students like foreign languages. The results of these investigations "tend to puncture several balloon-sized myths about foreign language studies which have risen over the horizon in the past years." The study scores the notion that English is spoken everywhere and that no need exists for foreign language study. Nine percent of those students surveyed have plans to become foreign language majors and "forty-five percent are preparing to work in a field where they feel command of a foreign language will be useful, including such diverse areas as science, anthropology, philosophy, music, journalism, business, aviation, law, inner city medicine, linguistics, engineering, social work in the U.S.A., social and religious service abroad, diplomacy, international law, interpreting, library science, etc."

Certainly, these young people concur with me that a commitment of the intellect is indispensable to the hard work which must accompany the attainment of a career goal. If students are grinding hard again, then foreign language study is as relevant as it has always been to the heart and head of man, and teachers of foreign languages are as sensitive to youth and their aspirations and to life, as any real teacher must be. □

## CREATIVE WRITING IN A REMEDIAL CLASS

*Mildred Silverstein*

On rare occasions, a natural event so sweeps over our city that it is impossible to ignore and go on with lessons as usual. Such a day was February 12th. A small blizzard had overwhelmed New York on a school holiday. By the next day, the "magic" had melted, but I was sure that most of my students were still dazzled by the bright beauty of the previous day.

"What happened yesterday?" I asked the class. "Snow," tumbled from all of them at once.

"What is snow?" I persisted.

"Ice" "Water" "Crystals."

"Think about it," I continued at the board. "Tell me what it felt like." Under the heading, "Snow," their quick responses were added.

"Wet," "soft," "cold," "feathery."

"What color is it?"

"White."

"Silver."

"What does it sound like?" "No sound." "Silence."

"What street do you live on?" "Bedford." "Nostrand."

"All right," I said, distributing sheets of paper, "pretend I've just arrived from another planet. I've never seen anything like this before. Tell me what your street looked like yesterday—how it felt, how you felt seeing it."

In a few minutes, the students were writing, crossing out, thinking, "recollecting in tranquility" the impact of a strong experience. I walked among them, encouraging them now and then. Everyone handed in what appeared to be laboriously written, brief paragraphs and our regularly scheduled lesson began.

### Accuracy of Writing Astonishes

As I read them that night, I was astonished at the accuracy of the descriptions. In spite of primitive spelling, belabored

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Ms. Silverstein is Teacher of English at Midwood High School.

vocabulary, the paragraphs seemed to fall into natural rhythms. Several caught that sense of wonder that we all experience when the snow transforms the ordinary into the beautiful. I typed the best of them into poetic lines and rexographed them the next morning. These students rarely write willingly and lack confidence. Yet many had spontaneously used similes and metaphors, vivid verbs and alliteration, had, in fact, expressed themselves poetically!

The next day, I used the students' work to make them conscious of what they had in fact achieved. As I read each poem aloud with the full, expressive reading we give to the work of professional poets, they saw each other with a new respect. We were able to isolate particular words or lines that were effective and learn why, here a word-picture, there a simile, here the beat, there the repetition of -ing verbs, there the letter sounds repeated to add music to the meaning. I returned the corrected copies, but instead of harping on misspellings, I praised the pupils for their vivid poetry and let them compare for themselves, the raw with the edited versions.

Since this lesson came at the beginning of the term, it was particularly valuable. I found strengths to praise and build upon. Students gained a new respect for themselves and the words they already use. An element of surprise and pleasure was added to the whole area of writing. This course, "Introduction to Acting," is designed for modified and remedial students. As we read a play aloud, questions suggest themselves about some aspect of plot or character. Often, I assign a question for homework which requires a two-or-three-sentence answer. We review these aloud the next day, revising and correcting each other, as a bridge to the next scene. The students have an opportunity to revise their answers before they hand them in. Then we proceed with the playreading.

**Importance of Establishing Tone**

It seems to me that the snow-poetry experience established

a tone that has carried over into other areas. The girls and boys correct each other's work...coming in on cue, reading expressively, reviewing written answers. Some read haltingly and others grow impatient, but there is now a new sensitivity to each other's feelings that is encouraging to the less fluent ones. Some of those, after all, have had their poetry in print!

When I shared this experience with my chairperson, she was particularly responsive. She made a point of visiting the class to praise their work and told them that two of the poems had been accepted for publication in our literary magazine, a thrilling experience for remedial students. Furthermore, she brought their work to the attention of our principal, who wrote me a warm note of encouragement and asked to be invited to the class.

Wordsworth, I am convinced, was right. Poetry is, indeed, the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" for teachers as well as students. The mind does indeed enjoy "the re-action of the emotion that is voluntarily described."

The magic of what happened, it seems to me, was the discovery for me and the students of how strong is the need for beauty and surprise in the city-bound. □

# HIGH POINTS SALUTES

## MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL

*for Its Senior Citizen Day*

Morris High School celebrated Senior Citizen Day on June 1, 1977. Student members of the Economic Development Council worked closely with Mrs. Geraldine Jones and Mrs. Gloria Mooney of the Morris faculty to plan and prepare for the day. Senior citizens were invited from a number of local centers, including the following:

David Houses Senior Citizen Center
Melrose - Mott Haven Senior Citizen Center
Mitchell Houses Senior Citizen Center
Mott - Haven Houses Senior Citizen Center

The celebration encompassed a program of special events for the senior citizens. Songs and poetry were presented in the school auditorium. Gymnastics were demonstrated in the school gymnasium. Lunch was served by students who joined their guests at tables for informal conversation. Finally, the senior citizens were escorted to a number of classes and invited to sit in. Senior Citizen Day promises to become an annual event at Morris High School. □

## RESPONSE TO *THE NON-TEACHING OF VALUES*

*Murray Rosenthal*

I am responding to *The Non-Teaching of Values*, by Ellen Walensky Stern, which appeared in *High Points* of February, 1977. Mrs. Stern writes, "I had imagined them (the students) to be kind, good-hearted, right-thinking, morally pure people. The more open they became, however, the more I had to revise that image." She then goes on to ask (rhetorically, of course), "Is it possible, after the events of the last sixteen years...still to instruct on 'the building of dynamic and worthwhile allegiances'?" Mrs. Stern then concludes, "Values can't be taught any more than taste can."

### We Need to Teach Values and Taste

It is true that in the last sixteen years, events often tended to stupefy our power of discernment. Many seemed to have become afflicted with value-blindness. However, unless a person *learns* how to cherish values which surpass his immediate needs, how will he rise above the crises of our society? Shall we simply teach how to recognize labels and not how to develop taste? If an individual does not develop standards of what is right and wrong, good and bad, then he views himself and consequently others as being insignificant. All people have an innate sense of wonder and mystery which needs to be developed.

These values cannot be assimilated by young people merely by learning abstract definitions. Many adolescents have a freshness of spirit which makes them highly effective in stripping the encrustations of hypocrisy from false beliefs. It is not the fault of adolescents that our society often invited them to choose between being either bookish or frivolous.

### Values Change as Society Changes

Moral values are not static. They are part of a functioning social system which some may see as a burdensome

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Mr. Rosenthal is Teacher of English at Bayside High School.

responsibility, but which others will embrace with profound conviction. The individual does not have to remain at the mercy of experts and their technology. He need not shoot down the albatross simply because he holds the crossbow. Young people should learn to pause and wonder about the way we are living. They should be taught that one is the totality of what one has chosen to do, and to ponder the quality, meaning and direction of actions and decisions. Learning is conditioned by the society in which it takes place. If it is disinterested, without values, then it is only defending the status quo. In science studies, one learns the importance of relying on evidence rather than on authority. In the study of history, one learns the sense of continuity with the past. In literature, one learns that each individual is of potentially infinite moral worth. Mrs. Stern apparently believes that hatred comes naturally. I submit that reverence for the dignity of human beings and the mystery of life are to be learned—and taught. I am not suggesting that the study of values should be confined to the scrutiny of brilliant students. The average student and the slow learner also need the benefits of dealing with questions of values and morals in their daily lives. Even the simplest essays, short stories and poetry are often rich in appropriate themes.

**Responsibilities of Students and of Schools**

Traditional values are not meant to be imposed—they may be chosen from among other alternatives by the learner. This is protection for variety and distinctiveness, not an attempt to promote faceless mediocrity. It is certainly the responsibility of the schools to encourage students to articulate their own moral beliefs, to learn to communicate with those whose views are different, and to deal tolerantly with these differences. Students should learn to wrestle with the great issues to which philosophy and religion address themselves. The wisdom of humanity, not primarily the opinions of the teacher, should be studied in the context of everyday living. Students should be taught how to

think through issues and alternatives and how to reach conclusions of their own.

The joys of inner living are often abandoned for exploitation of the world viewed as a gigantic tool box. We often teach "how to," we may glorify fun, but we should not fail to confront students with questions of moral challenge, with lasting insight, with what is ultimately precious. As adults, and certainly as teachers, it is our moral obligation to inspire our students with a feeling of outrage at injustice, a love for righteousness, the sanctity of human life, and the beauty of compassion. Do I exaggerate the great need for the teaching of values in our society? Just scan your daily newspaper.

**Mrs. Stern Responds**

Certainly I don't question the necessity for developing moral values. What I do question is the teacher's ability to instill these values. In my experience, at least, parents, peers, the mass media and the street have more influence on young people than teachers, who themselves are viewed by high school students from the perspective of a well established value system. □

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

I was dismayed when I read Irving Seidenberg's article "Preserving the Magic in Art" in the June, 1977 issue of *High Points.*

Mr. Seidenberg doesn't seem to understand the "Reading Instruction Through Art" program. It is an interdisciplinary experience for youngsters who have not met their requirement in art, and who are two or more years behind in reading.

The art teacher guides the pupils into developing the same kind of creative projects in art that the boys or girls would usually have in a regular art studio workshop that meets the requirement in art. The reading teacher develops a reading program built on the art experience.

At our school the students have a full art period each day, and a full reading period each day. The art and the reading teachers have the same preparation period, so that they can work together.

The trend in education today is to have interdisciplinary experiences, and we have found that our "Reading Instruction Through Art" program at South Shore High School has been positive and successful.

It would be appreciated, and fair to give Sylvia Corwin of John Kennedy High School, who worked hard to develop the program, a chance to write a rebuttal that would be printed in *High Points.*

Sincerely yours,

Simon Levine
Assistant Principal
Supervision of Art
South Shore High School

**Mr. Seidenberg Responds**

PRESERVING THE MAGIC IN ART supports a need to set art objectives and to evaluate the art in collaborative pro-

grams, such as reading-art. It was not intended to address RITA specifically. Certainly, RITA's failure to provide art objectives and criteria for evaluation fits into the context of this thesis.

Sarah A. Trotty, who surveyed the RITA program, stated, "The results were applaudable for reading purposes, but of little significance for art education purposes."

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GLIMPSES — TWO

*The night pursues me while I pursue the day.*
*I do not keep the light, nor am I kept.*
*The stars I cannot flee, nor can they stay —*
*all prisoners of orbits.*

.....

*The opalescent ring of light*
*holds not the bluejay's lonely flight —*
*the solitary cry*
*forever frozen in*
*the ice-bound black.*

.....

*I wade no longer in*
*bold currents that I cannot bide.*
*I lave the cradling sensuality*
*of the lulling tide.*

.....

*There is no now.*
*Look back and see*
*where once you were,*
*and up ahead —*
*a bend that you*
*may never reach.....*

.....

*Freshly laundered sheets*
*that gently cover dreamers —*
*meadows of new snow.*

*Leo Fenster*
*James Madison High School*

# BOOK REVIEW

## THE ENGLISH TEACHER: BASIC TRADITIONS AND SUCCESSFUL INNOVATIONS. Joseph Mersand, Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press Corp., 1977.

*Reviewed by Samuel Kostman*

Joseph Mersand is acknowledged as one of the deans of secondary English education in this country. Over the course of his four decades of experience as a high school teacher, department chairman, and college professor, he has left his mark on countless numbers of students, teachers, supervisors, and administrators. During those forty years he also produced a canon of works in the fields of English studies and English education. Mersand, a scholarly and prolific author, has written on subjects ranging from Chaucer's vocabulary and traditions in American literature to spelling and attitudes towards English teaching. *The English Teacher,* subtitled *Basic Traditions and Successful Innovations*, is a compendium of the wisdom that Dr. Mersand has gathered over that span of forty years.

The twenty six chapters that make up this book represent the lectures and addresses that the author has delivered over the years to various professional groups and organizations and to graduate students in methods courses in a dozen colleges and universities throughout the country. Those twenty-six chapters are encased in some six sections which follow an introductory pair of chapters on the emerging curriculum in English and the aims of English instruction.

### A Comprehensive Approach to English Teaching, Learning, and Supervision

The six sections on "Individualization of Instruction," "Reading, Writing, and Literature," "Teaching the Art of Lis-

Mr. Kostman is Principal of George Washington High School.

tening," "Lightening the Burden of the English Teacher," "The EnglishTeacher and Curriculum Improvement," and "The High School English Chairman's Persistent Problems" contain two dozen chapters on a panoply of English teaching, learning, and supervision problems. Those problems include, among many others, English for the bright and slow learner, individualizing English instruction, the role of the paperback in high school, teaching listening and literary skills, lesson planning, curriculum planning, and problems of the English supervisor.

There are several particularly practical, useful sections in *The English Teacher*. One section of the book containing three chapters is devoted to "Teaching the Art of Listening." Mersand devotes chapters to the reasons for and the methods of teaching listening as well as a cogent year-by-year treatment on how to teach the uses of television. Among the elements included in the last are a listing of some effective strategies and techniques for teaching television. Also provided is an overview of how to teach pupils to evaluate daytime programs, to judge newscasters and commentators, and how to improve television programming. He also deals effectively with problems of articulation with the feeder schools and the colleges, curriculum planning and development, lesson planning and lightening the burden of the English teacher. There is certainly a broad range to the areas of English education to which Mersand has addressed himself.

A man of particular erudition, Mersand's scholarship is reflected in his approach to the various topics in the book. He places all of his treatments of those topics in a historical perspective. As he says early in the book,

"...*The English Teacher* is different from the scores of English methods books on the teaching of secondary English. Like James, I have by scholarly disposition been inclined to face the past to ascertain, to paraphrase Mathew Arnold, the best that has been thought and practiced in English teaching. At the same time, I have ever been alert for any principles and practices that

pointed to more successful and more worthwhile results. As Toynbee and other historians through the ages have expressed so well, 'He who knows only the present is bound to repeat the errors of the past.'"

**Strengths and Limitations of the Approach**

In that very approach lie the book's strengths as well as its limitations. On the one hand problems such as the individualization of instruction, working with bright and slow learners, and what has happened to composition in the past fifty years are presented in a comprehensive historical context. They are studied with quotations from great educators of the past, citations from sixty-year-old New York State Secondary School English and Literature Syllabi, and allusions to a number of classical English secondary school teaching texts. Yet the reader is also left with the feeling that *The English Teacher* is so deeply rooted in the past that the challenges and problems of the present have been subsumed in the process.

Several cases in point illustrate this somewhat "backward look" at English education. At no point in the book does Mersand dwell upon the central problem facing English teachers today, not only in the inner city but throughout the country, namely: teaching reading as a basic skill apart from the teaching of literature appreciation. Mersand barely affords a fleeting glance to a problem that has become a national obsession, what with two years or more reading retardation rates as high as 85%-90% in some of the high schools of the nation. He makes but a passing reference to English as a Second Language as an emerging trend of the 1970's. The facts are that English as a Second Language by the mid-1960's was coming to full flower as a discipline allied to English and speech departments in many of the nation's cities and in some instances as independent departments. This critical area, of such vital importance with an ever-growing Hispanic and other foreign-born public school population, is an educational imperative in the professional training of any teacher of English today.

**Historical Approach Dated**

There are other significant current trends that *The English Teacher* omits. The entire realm of English mini-courses, "Cafeteria" of offerings, and modular scheduling is simply ignored. They represent one of the more interesting and significant trends in English education in the high schools over the past decade or so, yet Mersand says nothing about any of them.

That the historical approach is a dated one is evident also in the author's rather circumscribed conception of individualized instruction. He sees it as preparing unit instruction differentiating assignments, or providing individual conferences in or out of the classroom. Mersand offers no mention of programmed instruction, individual diagnostic and prescriptive instruction or the increasing use of independent study, peer tutoring, or the tutorial teacher-pupil approach developed and used in various high schools throughout the country over the past two decades.

Mersand's recommended methods for teaching the slow learner are a manifestation of the 1940's-1950's approach. Citing Lass and Smerling's outline of the characteristics of the slow learner, he lists, among others, "Lack of desire to excel scholastically or intellectually" and "Orally inarticulate. Refuses to participate in recitations... ." This kind of professional astigmatism can be refuted by many of today's teachers of the students so characterized. Those two characteristics betray the prejudices of the author and his references. They do not accurately describe the so-called "slow learner." Whether they tend to reject success or to elect silence depends in no small measure on the creativity and sympathy of their teachers. To suggest that students do not want to succeed or articulate is unfortunate and misleading.

There is a "scissors and paste" quality to many of the chapters, the best example being one section of chapter 11. In that chapter Mersand devotes four pages to reproducing the reactions of gifted students on the enjoyment of reading. The need for the inclusion of an element such as this in a chapter on how

to help students enjoy literature is questionable, especially since the less than gifted students are the ones who present the greatest challenge on that score today. Equally questionable is Mersand's use of extensive quotations from his correspondence with various paperback publishers, offered in his chapter on "The Paperback in the High School." He nominally makes use of their blurbs, along with statistical data, to assess the impact of paperbacks on high school English education. The publisher's replies though are more self-serving than revealing or informative. Inclusion of those passages is akin to asking Air France for its opinion on the Concorde's performance quality.

Another example of Mersand's technique in this vein in the book is his chapter "What Has Happened to Written Composition in the Past Fifty Years." Here too he used his historical approach, but after one has read the chapter there is the nagging, lingering doubt as to the value of the five-and-one-half page chapter with its extensive use of quotes, excerpts, and lists. Had that chapter been devoted to teaching the art/skill of writing it would have had a raison d'être more practical than the author's stated aim for the chapter, "The point that I am trying to make is that for sixty years teachers apparently have been quite effective in improving their student's writing without going blind or having a nervous breakdown in the process."

Reading Joseph Mersand's *The English Teacher* is almost simultaneously a rewarding and frustrating experience. There is distinct value in its broad, scholarly, and historical approach to English education. Despite those virtues though, the book ignores or subsumes in the process critical areas of concern to the English education professionals of the 1970's. Those areas include basic skills, teaching methods and programs and the more efficacious innovations of the decade. It is for those reasons that one regrettably but compellingly comes to the conclusion that *The English Teacher* is not the book for the English teacher/supervisor of all seasons. □

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